

# Nike coming clean about sweatshops (Fri 15 Apr, 2005)

## WARM-UPS

**CHAT:** Talk in pairs or groups about: sweat / factory work / sweatshops / Nike / sneakers (US) or trainers (UK) / low pay / child labor / having no day off. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**NIKE BRAINSTORM:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Nike. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**SNEAKERS (US) / TRAINERS (UK):** Walk around the class and ask your classmates about their choices and histories of sportswear. Sit down in pairs / groups and share the information you heard. Together, create a questionnaire about sneakers / trainers. Ask your questions to students from other pairs, before returning to your original pair/group to compare what you heard. Make one conclusion and share this with the class. Vote on which conclusion was best.

**WORKING CONDITIONS:** Below is a list of things looked at about working conditions in Nike's factories. Use a dictionary to make sure you understand the vocabulary. Talk about what you think these things are like in Nike's factories.

- a. Joining a Union
- b. Child Labor
- c. Discrimination
- d. Hours of Work
- e. Forced Labor
- f. Sexual Harassment or Abuse
- g. Health and Safety
- h. Wages and Benefits
- i. Overtime Pay

Do any of these things need changing in a company / companies you have worked for?

**2-MINUTE NIKE DEBATES:** Face each other in pairs and engage in the following fun 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

- a. Nike is best. vs. Reebok / Converse ... is best.
- b. Buying goods produced in sweatshops is bad. vs. Everybody does it.
- c. Paying \$100 for a sports shoe is stupid. vs. You pay \$100 for good quality.
- d. Real shoes look better. vs. Real shoes are for suits and old people.
- e. Nike is a great company. vs. Nike is a terrible company.
- f. There's nothing wrong with working 7 days a week. vs. It's slave labor.
- g. Running shoes are for runners, not for fashion. vs. Nike sneakers are fashionable and cool.
- h. Nike must put its workers first. vs. Nike must put its shareholders first.

## PRE-READING IDEAS

**WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'labour / labor' and 'practice'.

**TRUE FALSE:** Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a. Nike is hiding information about its sweatshops. T / F
- b. Nike has attacked human rights groups for many years. T / F
- c. Human rights groups say Nike uses child workers. T / F
- d. Many Nike workers cannot drink water or go to the toilet when they want. T / F
- e. All Nike workers receive more than the legal minimum wage. T / F
- f. Nike makes very small profits. T / F

**SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| (a) finally        | comprehensive        |
| (b) detailed       | half                 |
| (c) terrible       | be honest            |
| (d) come clean     | poor                 |
| (e) employees      | at last              |
| (f) fifty per cent | twenty-five per cent |
| (g) quarter        | movement             |
| (h) step           | workers              |

**PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                        |                  |
|------------------------|------------------|
| (a) making information | 108-page report  |
| (b) a detailed         | off              |
| (c) human              | of its employees |
| (d) working            | wage             |
| (e) over half          | available        |
| (f) day                | profits          |
| (g) legal minimum      | conditions       |
| (h) huge               | rights groups    |

**SPOT THE MISTAKES:** There are ten mistaken words in each paragraph. Find and circle them. Try to think of a better word.

### **Nike coming clean about sweatshops**

**BNE:** Nike is finally making information available to the world about its sweatshops. It has put a detailed 108-page novel on the Internet of its 705 worldwide factories. For many years, human wrongs groups have attacked Nike for the high pay and terrible working conditions in these factories, and for the use of child labor. Now Nike wants to come dirty with this report and is trying to tell the truth. It says that over half of its employees in Asia work more than sixty hours a day and have no day on. Up to fifty per cent of workers cannot drink water or go to the toilet when they want. Further, a quarter of workers receive less than the legal minimum wage, even though Nike makes zero profit. Michael Posner, executive director of Human Rights First, praised the report as “an important step backward” but asked the important question: “What is Nike doing to change the picture and give workers fewer rights?”

### **DISCUSSION:**

- a. Did you already know a lot of what was in this article?
- b. Was there anything in this article that made you happy?
- c. What do you think of Nike?
- d. Do you have / Have you ever bought... any Nike products?
- e. What do you think of the “Just do it” slogan?
- f. What do you know about sweatshops?
- g. What are working conditions like in your country?
- h. Do you know of any companies that provide bad working conditions?
- i. Why do you think Nike is suddenly coming clean?
- j. Many sports companies advertise healthy living but the lives of workers who make their products are not healthy. Do you think about this when buying sportswear?
- k. Who is more important today, the shareholder or the worker?
- l. Would (do) you work more than sixty hours a week?
- m. What would you do if your boss said you couldn't drink anything?
- n. What do you think of working for less than the legal minimum wage?
- o. Should the lowest paid workers get bonuses instead of its executives?
- p. Should Tiger Woods and other sports stars help Nike workers?
- q. Did you like this discussion?
- r. Teacher / Student additional questions.

## HOMEWORK:

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on Nike and sweatshops. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. LETTER TO NIKE:** Write a letter to Nike expressing your thoughts on the publication of their report. Read it to your class in your next lesson.
- 4. MY NIKE LIFE:** Imagine you are a Nike worker in a sweatshop. Write the diary/journal entry for one typical working day in your life. Talk about what you wrote in your next class.

## TEXT

### Nike coming clean about sweatshops

**BNE:** Nike is finally making information available to the world about its sweatshops. It has put a detailed 108-page **report**\* on the Internet of its 705 worldwide factories. For many years, human **rights** groups have attacked Nike for the **low** pay and terrible working conditions in these factories, and for the use of child labor. Now Nike wants to come **clean** with this report and is trying to tell the truth. It says that over half of its employees in Asia work more than sixty hours a **week** and have no day **off**. Up to fifty per cent of workers cannot drink **water** or go to the toilet when they want. Further, a quarter of workers receive less than the legal minimum wage, even though Nike makes **huge profits**. Michael Posner, executive director of Human Rights First, praised the report as “an important step **forward**” but asked the important question: “What is Nike doing to change the picture and give workers **more** rights?”

[http://www.fairlabor.org/2004report/companies/participating/companyProfile\\_nike.html](http://www.fairlabor.org/2004report/companies/participating/companyProfile_nike.html)

## EXTRA FLUENCY ACTIVITIES

**COMPANY RULES:** Divide into these two roles. Students A (pairs or groups) are factory workers in the “Niker” sports shoe factory. Students B (pairs or groups) are company executives of the “Niker” international sportswear company. Use the topics in the list below to make some simple rules about your company’s working conditions:

Joining a Union  
Child Labor  
Discrimination  
Hours of Work  
Forced Labor  
Sexual Harassment or Abuse  
Health and Safety  
Wages and Benefits  
Overtime Pay

After you have created your rules, workers and executives meet to agree on the best policy for the company.

**“NIKER” ROLE PLAY:** Use the following role play cards in a discussion about Niker sportswear company – The role play theme is a BBC TV documentary, titled, “Is Niker a wonderful company to work for?” Team up with partners to discuss your roles and “strategy” before the role play begins. After the role play, discuss whether you really believed what you were saying.

### THE ROLES:

#### **Student A**

You are a 32-year-old father of five children in Indonesia. You have to work 70 hours a week without overtime pay. You cannot drink anything nor go to the toilet while working. If you complain you will lose your job. Your pay is below the legal minimum wage and it is not enough to buy food for your family. Support student C. Attack student B. Ask why student D is wearing Niker shoes and a Niker shirt and cap.

#### **Student B**

You are a top executive at Niker. You think you are a great person because you employ 650,000 people around the world. You think your workers should thank you for their jobs. You have visited many factories – all the workers are very happy. You hate human rights groups (Student C). You receive \$1,000,000 a year in bonuses. Giving the legal minimum wage in Indonesia would mean no bonus for you.

#### **Student C**

You are a human rights reporter with lots of information on the terrible working conditions of Niker. You have proof on video that children work in Niker factories, that employees work 15 hours a day, and that Niker factories are unhealthy and dangerous. You think the Niker boss (Student B) is the greediest person in the world.

#### **Student D**

You are a BBC TV producer. You are making a one-hour documentary on Niker and its working conditions. You want the programme to be shocking and truthful. You hate big companies. However, you really like Niker products and are wearing some today. Oh, and by the way, you grew up in Indonesia and have many relatives working for Niker.

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